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ABSTRACT

Responses of over 300 teachers to a survey examining their perceived role in the implementation of Public Law 94-142 (the Education for All Handicapped Children Act) and their job satisfaction are reported. Results showed that about 50% of the respondents said they had not been told what responsibilities they had in the mainstreaming process and they had not had adequate input into the process or program. Almost all respondents indicated that money would not be better spent on gifted and talented students and that all money necessary should be spent to educate handicapped students. Other findings revealed that teachers feel they don't have meaningful input into decisions (in spite of their serving on major committees) and that they cannot get school policies changed. More than one third perceived their colleagues as feeling lonely. (PHR)

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# TEACHER DISSATISFACTION AND ALIENATION AS RELATED TO MAINSTREAMING IN EDUCATION*

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The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship of perceived role of regular education classroom teachers in implementing P.L. 94-142 and their perceived job satisfaction to their degree of work(er) alienation. In addition to these main study variables, selected characteristics of the study sample, such as age and race, were used to investigate further areas which might help account for the alienation of regular education classroom teachers in implementing P.L. 94-142.

A transaction-based theoretical framework, personality and organization theory (Argyris, 1957), was used to guide the study. Through this framework one looks at both personal and organizational characteristics to define how people develop and what they develop as coping strategies for their frustration working in an organization. Here, alienation was used as the coping strategy developed by regular education classroom teachers as a result of the transaction between their role in implementing the special education mandate, P.L. 94-142, and their job satisfaction.



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Literature and research reviews were conducted in the areas of alienation, role, and job satisfaction to provide support beyond that of the theoretical framework for the study. As a result of such searching, methodological decisions were made to conduct a field survey of regular education classroom teachers in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Over three hundred teachers returned usable questionnaires out of the approximately one thousand teachers who agreed to participate initially. The questionnaire which they completed consisted of four sections. The first section asked teachers to respond about such characteristics as age, sex, race, degree of formal schooling and in-service training (general and specific-to-mainstreaming), whether or not they had had a child mainstreamed into their class, and whether or not they perceived their role as having changed as a result of P.L. 94-142. The second section had teachers indicate their perceptions of their role in mainstreaming relative to preparation, decision-making input, and opinions of the mainstreamed

child. Third, teachers indicated their degree of alienation to work or to their fellow workers on the Alienation Scale (Adams, 1969). The last section of the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate, from a set of eighteen descriptors, the factors which describe their job relative to supervision, the work itself, and people. This last section assessed their job satisfaction through an adaptation of the Job Descriptive Index (Smith, Kendal, & Hulen, 1969).

Null hypotheses were generated, and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and through a multiple regression/correlation (MRC) analyses. In addition to examining the relationship among the major study variables through the hypotheses, additional analyses were used to assess the influence of selected study sample characteristics on their alienation.

A "composite" picture of a respondent to this study would show a female elementary regular education classroom teacher. She would be 26 years old, white, and would have had 5 years of teaching experience. This "composite" teacher would have completed

a bachelor's degree in an education-related area, but would not be working on another degree. She would have had little formal schooling or training in mainstreaming, but, if any, would have had one course (three credit hours) regarded as in-service training, which she would consider useful. For the most part, though, she would have taken the training because she wanted to have it. This teacher probably would not have had a child mainstreamed into her class as yet, and thus would not feel as if her role as a classroom teacher had changed. But, if she had to choose one service which would help her implement the mainstreaming mandate, she would rather have an aide than a resource teacher, in-service training, consultant, or psychologist.

Relative to their role in implementing P.L. 94-142, around half of the teachers indicated that: (1) they had not been told what responsibilities they had in the mainstreaming process, and (2) they had not had adequate input into the process or program. Almost all respondents indicated that money would not be better spent on gifted and talented students rather than handicapped ones, and all

the money necessary to educate handicapped students should be spent. Responses elicited from teachers also showed them to have positive feelings about themselves in the mainstreaming process, and their role and capabilities in teaching a mainstreamed child as well as any of their regular education colleagues.

In terms of alienation, the strongest indicators were those which focused on schools as imperfect organizations. Teachers feel that they don't have meaningful input into decisions that are made in their schools in spite of serving on major committees, and that they cannot get policies changed in the school. Additionally, more than one-third of the respondents perceived that their colleagues feel lonely.

Relative to job satisfaction, grouped responses showed overall job satisfaction to be relatively high. Teachers described the factor of supervision on their job more positively than their perspective of people on their job. Most respondents indicated they felt the work

itself, however, to be much less positive a part of their job satisfaction than the other two factors.

Black regular education classroom teachers would be less likely to have had a child mainstreamed into their classroom than their white counterparts. In addition, both black and white teachers whose most recent degree is the Master's and who perceive a change in their role would be more likely to have had a child mainstreamed into their class than would their colleagues.

The major null hypothesis and all three minor null hypotheses were rejected. Over 35% of the variance in the alienation of regular education classroom teachers was accounted for by their job satisfaction and perceived role in implementing P.L. 94-142. In addition, selected study sample characteristics such as age, race, having had a child mainstreamed into their classroom, and perceiving a change in their role as a result of P.L. 94-142 added another 7% variance to be accounted for in alienation. Several other findings also

emerged:

1. The older the teacher, the more likely he/she is to perceive a change in role as a result of P.L. 94-142;

2. the older the teacher, the more positive his/her work-specific job satisfaction;

3. black teachers indicated less people-specific job satisfaction than their white counterparts;

4. teachers who have had children mainstreamed into their classroom are more likely to perceive the role in implementing P.L. 94-142 positively than are their counterparts;

5. teachers who have had children mainstreamed into their classroom are more likely to describe their work-specific job satisfaction positively than are their counterparts; and

6. teachers who perceive their role has changed as a result of P.L. 94-142 are more likely to describe their overall job satisfaction and people-specific job satisfaction positively than are

their counterparts.

Those teachers who perceived a change in their role were largely those who had experienced a mainstreamed child in their classroom. Furthermore, having had a mainstreamed child in the classroom was associated with a more positive perception by the teachers of their role in implementing P.L. 94-142. Less positive aspects of teachers' roles emerged, too. When asked to give an example of one way in which their role had changed as a result of P.L. 94-142 some teachers responded:

> "I need more time--the time passes by so quickly,"
>
> "It has caused me to feel less qualified,"
>
> "Pressure,"
>
> "Not trained to deal with such a range of problems," and
>
> "Along with all the typical problems and frustrations of teaching, a lot more effort, understanding and patience is needed to deal with a mainstreamed child

in my classroom."

Does this mean that school boards and their staffs should consider mainstreaming a child into every classroom in order to assure positive perceptions of their teachers' role in mainstreaming? No! As a correlational descriptive study, no such causal inferences should be made from the data in the first place. Second, one of the very complaints that teachers seem to be voicing through this study is the fear that mainstreaming, as a mandate, was initiated too quickly. At the system/organization level, clear responsibilities for the role were not outlined, vehicles were not set up for allowing input and feedback into the system, and training or schooling was not preparatory for the role; thus, all teachers have become disgusted, frustrated, and pressured. But those who have experienced mainstreaming first-hand seem to develop a more positive outlook in actuality.

In terms of their job satisfaction, teachers describe their supervision and their colleagues more positively than their work. It

is also the teachers' job satisfaction (or lack of it) which is more largely associated with alienation than is their perceived role in implementing the mandate. Instrumentation may be responsible for some of the discrepancy in the contributions of the two variables; the job satisfaction section of the questionnaire was more reliable, valid, and fully developed than the role section. These differences, alone, could account for a large measure of the variation.

As with the positive perceptions of their role, teachers are more job satisfied if they have had a child mainstreamed into their classroom than if they have not had. Again, should we mainstream a child into every classroom so that teachers can become satisfied? No. We need to decrease the rapidity with which we implement quick solutions, on the one hand, yet increase the delivery of appropriate support services, such as those requested by teachers on the other hand.

Teachers, when they enter the "profession," may not be fully

aware of the responsibilities, obligations, and duties of working in organizations like schools (Corwin & Edelfelt, 1977). Preparatory programs are too short to be able to expose the potential teacher to all the aspects, overt and hidden, of being an educator, or to give them all the skills necessary. So, teachers may feel overwhelmed for much of their professional lives by the mandates that need fulfilling, the paperwork that needs pushing, and the non-curricular, non-instructional trivia with which they must deal.

The first state in coping with the "world of classroom teaching" may be wide-eyed excitement and idealism. Next, the challenge of dealing with the complexities of the classroom and school may help teachers cope with the work. At this stage, satisfaction with their instructional role is manifested. Third, teachers may reach a "neutral" point of acceptance. Frustration with the "system" is evidenced. Here, they neither love nor hate their job in a general sense, but have come to understand the factors, both hindering and

facilitative, with which they must deal, to turn their focus again towards what they are doing in the classroom. Fourth, teachers may become resigned to their work, evidencing little interest, enthusiasm, or esprit de corps; or they may rebel or become alienated, the fifth stage in this coping process. As an adaptive mechanism for dealing with the frustrations of school organizational life, alienation, upon which this study focused, can be identified by feelings of withdrawal, isolation, normlessness, and powerlessness. At this point, teachers may transfer their need fulfillment to a source external to the school, classroom, or student. Or, they may take on a new thrust, such as mainstreaming, and again become excited and satisfied with their instructional role. This fifth stage of alienation may be the last; or, it may be that a sixth stage, "burnout," becomes a coping mechanism developed by teachers who are unable to "renew" themselves through new challenges..

"Burnout" may be a function of teachers' inabilities to develop coping strategies or adaptive mechanisms and is the "syndrome of

emotional exhaustion and cynicism that frequently occurs among individuals who do peoplework" (Maslach & Jackson, 1979). Symptoms of burnout include "mental fatigue, anxiety, depression, anger, [and] even physical ailments" (Reed, 1979, p. 12). As Seeman (1959) noted, the variables of control and withdrawal affected to some degree an individual's alienation. It may be a matter of the degree to which an individual feels out of control relative to his/her environment and, therefore, the degree to which he/she withdraws that determines whether or not the individual is alienated or burned-out.

Although this study focused on teacher alienation as a function of perceived role and job satisfaction, not all factors which lead to increased alienation in teachers were accounted for--less than half, according to the instrumentation and analyses. Therefore, other things are producing alienation in teachers. What those factors are remains an area open for further research. Additionally, the linkages between alienation and burnout as coping strategies

need to be investigated further. Although there appears to be some "developmental" progression in the coping mechanisms that teachers exhibit, more research is needed to define them and operationalize them and to establish both preventive and remedial programs which can forestall symptoms of burnout. What makes some people use some coping mechanisms and not others? Is there some linear combination of mechanisms which is predictive of burnout? At what points do teachers use certain coping mechanisms and not others? What relationships exist between teacher burnout and school climate? These are just some of the questions which can serve to guide future research and should be of great importance in the development and implementation of mainstreaming programs and research.

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